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Weekly Update: H1N1 – A New Kind of Flu – What You Need to Know!

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Seasonal Flu: Don't Wait...Vaccinate!

Seasonal flu vaccine is available to the general public at the health department during regular clinic hours. You do not need an appointment. Flu shots are \$25 but no one will be refused for inability to pay. Seasonal flu shots are generally available at health providers across the community. The timing of vaccine shipments can be sporadic, so some providers may be out of vaccine for awhile and then get in another shipment. In past years, you may have received a flu shot later in the fall, don't wait this year! Influenza activity is already taking place in the community. The flu shot will provide protection throughout the duration of the flu season. It will not protect you against the new H1N1 virus (swine flu).

Who should get it? Everyone over the age of 6 months who is not allergic to any component of vaccine.

H1N1 Vaccine News

Local health providers and school personnel continue to meet weekly to coordinate plans to vaccinate this community. Our goal is to accomplish this in a timely manner that is as convenient as possible for our residents.

Supply - KDHE tells us to expect the H1N1 vaccine supply to be quite limited when it first becomes available in the first half of October. KDHE has changed their distribution strategy to provide more vaccine to counties with higher percentages of high risk populations. That should mean more vaccine for Riley County since youth are a high risk group and we have the youngest average population in the state.

Target Population – These have not changed. Who gets the vaccine will be determined by the health department, with guidance from KDHE and the CDC, according to the risk categories below, type of vaccine that arrives, and amount of vaccine that arrives. The High Risk category encompasses more than half the population of the United States. We anticipate starting with the Higher Risk category, and we may have to prioritize even further, initially. We are working with area physicians to coordinate getting vaccine to those who need it most. Doing so will better protect us all.

High Risk (according to the ACIP) includes:

*pregnant women

*people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age

*health care and emergency medical services personnel

*children 6 months of age through 24 years of age and

*persons 25 - 64 years of age who have chronic medical conditions

Higher Risk (according to the ACIP) includes:

*pregnant women

*people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age

*health care and emergency medical services personnel in direct contact with persons likely to be infected

*children 6 months of age through 4 years of age, and

*children 5 through 18 years of age who have chronic medical conditions

FAQ

How widespread is the flu now? Kansas is one of several states that has reached the “widespread” level of flu illness. That is worse than the current national average and the earliest it has ever been this prevalent. The total number of local cases cannot be known, but Lafene Student Health Center at KSU today reported 52 active cases and the emergency room at Mercy is seeing generally 10 -15 persons in a 24 hour period with influenza like symptoms.

Why wouldn't my doctor test me for H1N1 when I was sick? In the vast majority of cases, it is not necessary. Most otherwise healthy people don't even need to go to the doctor, staying home and taking care of yourself is usually the best treatment. A limited number of clinics across the state are testing a few random patients and this is adequate for KDHE to follow the spread of the disease.

Is the H1N1 vaccine safe? Yes. Scientists have been making safe flu vaccine for decades, this particular H1N1 virus is new, the process for making vaccine for it is not. Clinical trials in the United States and around the world have found it safe and effective. Generally, when H1N1 vaccine is offered to your population group, you should get it.

How many shots will I need? Based upon U.S. clinical trial results, currently KDHE guidelines are that one dose (shot) for persons 10 years of age and older will be highly effective within 7 days. They are still recommending two doses for children 9 years of age and younger. The two shot dosage recommendation for children may change based upon the findings of the U.S. clinical trials for children; we hope to have that information next week. Information regarding dosage for pregnant women will be out soon as well.

For further information please contact the health department or go to www.kdheks.gov/H1N1.